

THE CALIFORNIA BOTANIC GARDEN

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Botanists have long realized that the climatic conditions in California are such that most favorable conditions exist in many parts of the state for the development of botanical gardens. It has long been hoped that somehow, somewhere, such an institution might be established on such a basis that it might be reasonably expected to develop into a plant science research institution, equaling the great botanical gardens of the Old World and of the Central and Eastern United States. There is now distinct promise that such an institution will be developed in Los Angeles as the California Botanic Garden.

Certain public spirited men in Los Angeles pooled their interests in 3200 acres of land located in the Santa Monica Mountains, fifteen miles from the center of the city, and deeded the entire property to the Garden Foundation, Incorporated. The Foundation is a non-stock, non-profit association organized under the laws of California which permits such organization for certain charitable, educational and scientific purposes, and was created specifically to provide for the establishment, development and maintenance of the botanic garden. The personnel of the Garden Foundation consists of E. D. Merrill, Arthur Bent, H. C. Oakley, H. O. Davis, John Treanor, A. E. Bell, H. H. Braly, Shepard Mitchell and R. C. Gillis. In order to finance the proposition a bond issue of \$2,500,000 was sold and the property and proceeds of the bond issue were placed in trust with the Metropolitan Trust Company of California for the benefit of the Botanic Garden.

The tract is situated near the city of Santa Monica, extending from Beverly Boulevard on the south to Mulholland Highway on the north, ranging in altitude from four hundred to two thousand feet above sea level. It entirely surrounds Mandeville Cañon and includes its delimiting ridges. The plan of development calls for the setting aside of somewhat in excess of 800 acres forming the entire floor and lower slopes of Mandeville Cañon as the Botanic Garden, and the subdivision and sale of the surrounding acreage for residential purposes. The garden area will be delimited by the garden boulevard, and this area, under the Declaration of Trust, will remain inalienable in perpetuity, to be devoted to the purposes indicated, that is, a botanic garden. Owing to the topography of the region the garden will be totally different from the similar great institutions that have been developed in and near other large cities.

The California Botanic Garden is today heavily endowed in land. The present problem of the Garden Foundation and the Metropolitan Trust Company is to convert a part of the land endowment into productive funds, for the purpose of retiring the bonds already sold and providing a funded endowment that will ensure the proper development and future support of the garden. In ultimate analysis the future success of the California Botanic Garden depends on the success of the

contemplated subdivision, for under the terms of the trust agreement all profits from the real estate transactions are to form the endowment of the institution. Any development in the immediate future must be financed from the bond issue, and funds so expended are of course a charge against the future funded endowment of the California Botanic Garden.

It is planned to develop the garden on the basis of the vegetation at present existing in Mandeville Cañon, and fortunately the native vegetation of the cañon is largely undisturbed. Among the trees the sycamores and oaks are well developed, and there is a great wealth of herbaceous plants and shrubs in the cañon and on its slopes. The first plantings will of course be at or near the south end of the tract contiguous to Beverly Boulevard. The climatic conditions are most favorable, as certain parts of the area are frost free, while the cañon is protected against heavy winds. While presumably formal plantings may be stressed at and near the main entrance of the garden, the plantings over most of the area will be informal in nature. The numerous lateral ravines, varying slopes and exposures, render the area particularly suitable for informal treatment. Likewise, there is a great range of possibilities in developing regional gardens as well as special features, such as a cactus garden, a succulent garden, collection of roses, iris and bulb plants.

The H. C. Oakley estate, which will ultimately form a part of the Botanic Garden, is already highly developed, the plantings containing a great wealth of subtropical plants that thrive under the conditions there existent. Here are numerous species of mature palms; various tropical and subtropical ferns, including tree ferns from Australia; a number of subtropical fruits as yet rare in other gardens in California; a large collection of bamboos; a great variety of flowering shrubs, vines and trees; while the banana regularly ripens its fruits in the Oakley garden.

It is planned to develop the California Botanic Garden as a plant science research institution on a broad basis, making it one covering world botany rather than as an institution devoting its energies to a study of strictly local problems. This will involve the immediate construction of an administration building, the equipment of laboratories, the building up of a general reference library, the assembling of a comprehensive collection of botanical material in the form of an herbarium, the establishment of technical and popular periodicals and the selection of the necessary technical staff. In pursuance of the general plan of developing the institution and indicating in some measure its potential field, plans have already been evolved for prosecuting field work in foreign countries and it is expected that within a few months actual exploration on behalf of the new institution will be in progress in from twelve to fifteen different regions. The development must of course be gradual but the California Botanic Garden, now an established institution, is potentially a highly endowed one, which in due time should take its place among the great institutions of its kind in the world.

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